

GETTING BACK TO BASICS

BY SALLY DAVIDSON
Director
Marion County Library

Recruitment and retention of librarians is of critical importance and there is a role for all of us to play in that effort. The South Carolina Library Association's 2004 conference theme, "Librarians: Mentoring the Next Generation," points to the fact that we should be taking steps to insure that essential philosophies, skills and abilities are passed on. Part of the recruitment and retention process is participating in professional meetings and associations. Of late, library directors have been conspicuous by their absence. The excuses given – "too busy . . . can't afford to be away from the office . . . programs not what I need." We are all too busy. A couple of days away out of the office several times a year will not tip the scales toward disaster. A large portion of a top executive's job should take you out of the office. The library should be able to perk along without you for short periods of time.

Perhaps your role should be to share what you know or have experienced that might help others.

When you belong to a professional group, isn't it your responsibility to support it – with your time, your talent, and by making attendance at appropriate events available to your staffs as well? If you think the programs are dull – offer to make a presentation yourself, or at least offer helpful ideas about what you would find relevant and useful. Don't get anything from the meeting that is of help to you? Perhaps your role should be to share what you know or have experienced that might help others.

Library school curricula have morphed into something quite different than they used to be. Have those currently teaching in library schools worked

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FOCUS

Recruiting and retaining
library professionals

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south carolina
STATE LIBRARY

As you read through this issue of the newsletter, you will find that it is dedicated to the topics of recruitment, an issue that has great significance on the future of librarianship in SC. The State Library faces the same challenges in recruitment that all libraries must confront: succession planning, salaries, etc.

If you have not already heard, recruitment for a new State Library director is underway. I have informed the State Library Board that I intend to retire June 30, 2005.

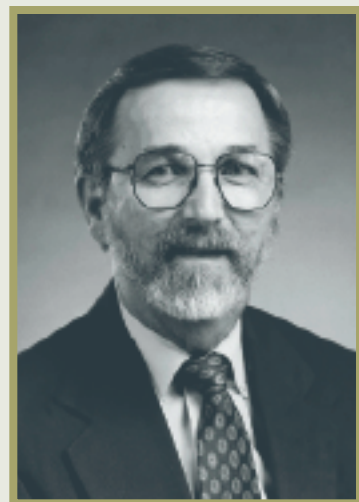
The State Library Board will act as the Search Committee. Applications will be sent to all members, who will inform B.G. Stephens, State Library Board Chair, of their top choices. Mr. Stephens will rank the candidates by the number of votes they receive. The highest-ranking candidates will be invited to interview for the position.

The State Library Board wanted to include the statewide library community in the process. It convened a meeting of members of the various statewide library

organizations, a state government representative, and a state senator. The purpose of this meeting was to elicit information on what they perceived to be important qualifications for a new director. The Board also met with the State Library Management Team for the same purpose. Mr. Stephens also met with the Association of Public Library Administrators to discuss their thoughts on this issue.

The Board will conduct interviews in early 2005. Candidates will have the opportunity to meet statewide library leaders and the State Library staff. After a candidate is selected, the Board is required to present a salary recommendation to the Agency Head Salary Commission, which will set the salary of the director. It is expected that a new director will begin work on July 1, 2005 or soon thereafter.

The Board's recruiting process is much like others. A unique component was the meetings with library and state government leaders and the State Library management staff. These meetings provided valuable



BY **JIM JOHNSON**
SC State Librarian

insight into what others feel are needed attributes for the next State Library Director. Another wrinkle is the presence of the Agency Head Salary Commission. This could potentially delay the hiring process if the selected candidate does not agree to the approved salary.

There is much anxiety surrounding the recruitment of a state librarian. The State Library Board has lessened that somewhat by informing the library community of its plans and involving others as much as possible, recognizing that the final decision on a new State Library Director rests with the State Library Board.

The South Carolina State Library is pleased to unveil its new logo and newsletter design with this issue of MORE. The logo is a freshened approach to the lions which have been the symbol for the State Library for many years. This new look will help brand the State Library with a clean, updated design. This look will be carried forward in letterhead, envelopes, business cards, exhibits and other collateral produced for the State Library..

MORE reflects the idea that the State Library and all libraries offer more than people realize. By creating a true name for the newsletter we hope to convey this idea and to encourage people to visit their library and learn just how much more they do offer.

The next issue of MORE is dedicated to marketing and public relations. We will share information on this transformation for the State Library as well as stories, ideas and best practices from libraries around the state.

New Year **New Look**



south carolina
STATE LIBRARY

A RARE BREED

Program Managers for Libraries Serving the Blind and Handicapped

BY **GUYNELL WILLIAMS**
Deputy Director, SC State Library

Librarian recruitment challenges are nothing new. However, there is one area of recruitment for librarianship that exceeds the word "challenge." There is a group of professionals across the country that manages our nation's libraries for the blind and physically handicapped. All libraries of this type are part of the Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped's (NLS) network of 57 regional and 77 subregional libraries throughout the U.S. These libraries serve more than 766,000 readers.

Except for those states where there are sub-regional library directors, the top manager of an NLS network library is that state's expert and the only manager of that type in the entire state. Given this very "special" area of librarianship, is it any wonder that recruitment is difficult? State librarians and other administrators who supervise these program managers shudder when their Talking Books directors announce an intention to vacate their positions. Yes, shudder! They know that unless they have had the forethought to engage in smart succession planning, they are, shall we say, "up the creek without a paddle."

The best way to get a good Talking Books Program director is to grow one's own. Minus that, one must wade into the "NLS network pool" and, to put it bluntly, prepare to steal someone else's director—or even worse, someone else's homegrown successor. However, in order to do this, one must wade into the pool with competitive salaries. (Therein lies the real dilemma—particularly for a state such as South Carolina.) How do state library administrators in states with \$40k starting salaries compete with fellow network states that have \$65k starting salaries? The answer is, not very well. And so goes the situation in South Carolina.

Does this mean that administrators in these situations should toss up their hands in defeat? No. This is the time when management must reassess needs and look beyond the unique set of technical skills that are

needed to manage such a program. Specifically:

- Refocus and seek a good, experienced, intelligent and highly professional library program manager with a sincere interest in library services for persons with disabilities.
- Seek a manager who exists within one's own geographical area and, most importantly, within one's own "economic" stratosphere. (Simply put, stay in your own back yard and recruit from the pool you can afford.)
- Talk with staff and get a commitment from each to teach the manager recruited all there is to know about the technical aspects of the jobs they perform.
- Make plans to supplement such training with related established and formal training.
- Lastly, when this person found, offer a salary equivalent to that of other program directors with commensurate managerial experience.

These little "gems of wisdom" are offered as "lessons learned" from those of us at the South Carolina State Library who were charged with the awesome task of recruiting a talking books program director. State librarian Jim Johnson (the first TBS director for South Carolina) and I (the state's fourth TBS director) know the rewards of this field of librarianship. Consequently, we were determined to find a good manager for our state's more than 7,800 registered talking book readers. They deserve no less than our best.

When we put our "revised recruitment plan" into action, South Carolina's Talking Book Services (TBS) director's position had been vacant for more than 17 months. On January 17, 2005, Pamela N. Davenport, formerly manager of the Cayce-West Columbia Branch Library of the Lexington County Library System, became the state's fifth TBS program director. Perseverance definitely has its rewards.

GROWING THEIR OWN

York County's Education Contract

BY **DAVID LYON, DIRECTOR**

York County Library

About 25 years ago, the York County Library began a program to "grow our own" professional librarians. It was modeled on an old LSCA (Library Services and Construction Act) program used even more years ago by the South Carolina State Library to increase the number of professionally trained librarians in the State.

Essentially, the program works like this: the Library pays the cost of tuition and books for an individual to attend the School of Library Science (SLIS) program at the University of South Carolina. In return, the individual agrees to work at the York County Library for a period of three years upon completion of the degree, at the beginning professional salary in effect at the time of graduation. There is a contract that sets forth the duties and responsibilities of the Library and of the scholarship recipient.

Although there are no firm guidelines about who is eligible for the program, in practice, it has been an individual who has worked for the Library for several years, has done an outstanding job during that time, and who would like to pursue a library degree. Equally as important, the person's position on the Library staff must be one that, with only minor changes in the job description, could become a professional position.

During the time that this Education Contract has been in effect, eight individuals have participated in the program. Seven are still with the Library, several in mid-management or senior management positions. Only one person failed to meet the full requirements of the contract, and that is because her spouse was transferred to the West coast.

When our first candidate started, she had to travel regularly between Rock Hill and Columbia to take classes, and this was before I-77 was complete. Today, students can drive about three miles to York Technical College and take classes through USC-SLIS's distance education program. While it is much easier today than 25 years ago, it is also much more expensive as tuition costs have risen substantially.

The Education Contract has more than proved its worth to the York County Library and to the individuals who have participated in the program. It has made recruitment much easier and has been especially beneficial in the retention of trained and highly qualified professional librarians.

Dennis Adams, **Beaufort County Library's** Head of Information Services, was recently awarded the Outstanding Librarian Award by the South Carolina Library Association. Mr. Adams has been with the system for more than 20 years. He is also known around the county as the "Answer Man," writing a weekly column for the *Beaufort Gazette*.

About 200 people attended a book discussion and signing by Carl Hiaasen, sponsored by the Friends of the **Richland County Public Library**, December 1, 2004. Hiaasen, the author of eight best selling novels, began his career as a general assignment reporter for *The Miami Herald* and he has written a regular column for the paper for the past 19 years. His first novel, *Tourist Season*, was named "one of the ten best destination reads of all time" by *GQ*, and *Hoot*, his first book for young readers, received the Newberry Honor.

NEWSW

Dillon County Library System

announces the new Lake View Library Branch Manager: Mertis Nance Barnett. Mrs. Barnett is a native of Lake View and a 1974 graduate of Lake View High School and a graduate of Florence Darlington Technical College, where she received an Associate's degree in Public Relations. Mrs. Barnett holds a Bachelors of Arts Degree from Coker College with a major in Sociology.

The Pelion Branch of the **Lexington County Library** held its 2nd Annual Teen Poetry Contest in October 2004, part of the Teen Read Week celebration, Oct. 17-23, 2004. Students in Pelion Middle and Pelion High Schools and home-schooled teens were asked to write and submit original poetry. 37 students participated and 56 poems were submitted.

worthy

KEEPING IN TOUCH

An Applicant Registry for Potential Library Employees

BY **PAMELA BRILL, DIRECTOR**
Saluda County Public Library

Jack Welch, past General Electric CEO, says that variation is the key to an effective team when developing a work force.

He distinguishes between the different types of people based on what he calls the four E's and one P. They are:

1. **Energy** level
2. Ability to **Energize** others around common goals
3. Possess the **Edge** to make yes and no decisions
4. Able to **Execute** and deliver on promises
5. Having **Passion** in their work.

How does a small, rural county library like Saluda accomplish that variation in hiring its Library team? The challenge lies in recruiting people from all generations.

At Saluda County Library we are beginning an outreach program with the area high school and technical college to employ students on a part-time basis to allow for the development of relationships and, hopefully, cultivate an interest in the functions of the Library for a career path. We are also reaching out to the senior citizen and home schooling communities as well.

One solution that could help provide a qualified professional pool for recruitment is for the SC State Library to establish a professional and para-professional registry (database) that would represent a wide array of individuals within library science. This free service would be administered by the State Library and would assist public libraries in their search for qualified information personnel.

Those who volunteer for the registry would have fully documented their professional/paraprofessional background, knowledge, experiences and on-the-job training within the field of library science, and would make their resumes available to employers seeking qualified library science applicants. When a member elects to participate in the placement service, their skills, education and industry experience would be automatically compared to the requirements of current job openings. The member and potential employer would be notified when a match is made. The employer would not have to rely solely on local or national advertising of position, and potential candidates would have the confidence that no opportunities are missed.

THE NEXT GENERATION

Recruitment at USC's School of Library and Information Science

BY **DAN BARRON**
DIRECTOR, SLIS

"What a great profession. Everyone should want to be a librarian" or so we think. As we work and serve in the library profession, we forget to let others know what a great career this is.

Part of the issue in recruiting is stereotype. The image is still there of the little old lady with the bun making "shhhhshing" noises. Students need information on the new image of the librarian. With more colorful and up-to-date recruitment materials, this problem is being solved. Photographs of current librarians doing their jobs give the profession a real face. To see someone interacting with the public, all sizes and shapes and colors, gives a true picture of the variety involved in the everyday life of the public library.

For potential students to know what is available in public libraries, we need to have accurate descriptions of the jobs our graduates are doing. Today's students are from a visual world. Show them a picture and the job becomes real. Have electronic, print, and video recruiting materials so that you can use the best format for the situation. We need to package the library environment into a real world recruitment piece for young people. For older career changers, print materials work better. Electronic format crosses all age groups, but accessibility is a key factor here if you plan to use technology as a major recruiting tool.

Another obstacle to overcome is the low salaries paid to practicing professionals in the library field. It is going to take a concerted effort on the part of library leadership at the state and national level to make our funding bodies aware of the salary gap in our profession.

Librarians are significantly underpaid in comparison to other occupations. Librarians need to become advocates for change. We need to step up at budget hearings and make ourselves heard. We need to either be our own lobbyists or hire professional lobbyists to speak up for us. The facts and figures are there. We need to gather them systematically and use them effectively to make our case.

One of the best recruiting tools at the School of Library and Information Science is the endorsement and support of our alumni. At conferences and meetings, our alumni speak up for the profession and the School.

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We keep alumni informed of the academic perspective though print and electronic communication. We refer them to articles in academic literature to keep them up-to-date on changes in the profession.

The Director speaks to alumni groups, informing them of new trends and issues. Practically, they can keep us informed of the situation in their local libraries, and, academically, we can keep them informed of trends in library education. It helps us make sure our courses are relevant and timely for the real world.

Recruitment, retention and advancement of African Americans in the library profession have been a focus of the school this year. A task force of African American leaders in the state have been meeting to determine how to address these crucial issues.

Dr. Arthur Gunn, former Dean of Clark Atlanta University's library school, spoke to a standing-room-only audience at SCLA to bring the discussions of the leadership group to the attention of the entire state. The group feels that visits to predominantly African American colleges and financial incentives for students are two initiatives that would help with recruitment.

Students also need to be approached earlier, even in high school or middle school. Career fair visits to secondary schools were suggested. Retention and advancement are more complicated and individualized issues that need to be addressed. Each library has to make efforts suited for its own

circumstances.

The Roundtable for African American Concerns of SCLA will be helping with awareness efforts. The leadership of that group is a part of the task force here at the school.

"The Palmetto and Pine Recruiting and Education Initiative" is a partnership between Maine and South Carolina. It will design and test best recruiting practices and networking to support successive generations of rural public library leadership and staff using a collaborative model in the two states.

Full scholarships will be awarded on a competitive basis to eight students in each state. Scholarship students graduating from the program are expected to work for at least three years in rural libraries in Maine and South Carolina. The federal grant emphasizes supporting minority candidates, and they are encouraged to apply.

More about the project and the scholarships can be found at: <http://www.libsci.sc.edu/palmettopine/palmettopinehome.htm>

Recruitment is a vital part of what we do at the School of Library and Information Science. Each and every librarian in the state is a recruitment tool for the profession. We need to promote our libraries and our profession. Get out of your library to recruit. Visit local schools for career days, civic group meetings and community events. Be your own best advertisement.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

on the front lines, in the last 10 to 15 years? Granted, computers and technology are important, but those of us in the trenches still need to be able to hire new library school graduates who actually know how to do the work that is unique to libraries -- catalog a book, from scratch; develop a core reference collection; weed appropriately; conduct a reference interview. Most of the library school students I've seen seem to be preparing to be directors -- what about intermediate steps? They are all well versed on how to advance their careers, but sadly lacking in some of the practical skills. If I had time to teach a new professional how to catalog books, I probably could

get along without the new hire. A small system needs librarians who can hit the ground running, thrill to the challenge of being a missionary, and make a fashion statement wearing several hats at once.

I don't think I would ever have gone to library school had I not first worked in several kinds of libraries and been exposed to some great mentors. It has felt peculiar to interview new library school graduates who have never actually worked in a library. Even stranger to me is the fact that you can now, through distance education, go to library school without actually ever being IN library school. Perhaps, technically, it shouldn't make a difference.

But, practically, I think it does.

Reinstating aggressive scholarship and internship programs, returning to the fundamentals in library school, and members of the profession accepting responsibilities to the profession would go a long way toward making a practical difference. In the last ten years, four people who have worked in our library system as clerks have left to go to library school or are planning to. If setting an example, making people part of a team, giving people the real work to do and then stepping aside and letting them do it can work in a small library system, it can work on a larger scale.

for your CALENDAR

SC Library Legislative Day

March 2, 2005
Adam's Mark Hotel
statelibrary.sc.gov/apla

SCASL Annual Conference

March 2-4, 2005
Florence Civic Center
www.scasl.net/conferences.htm

SCSL Notable Documents Awards Ceremony

March 14, 2005—10:00am
South Carolina State Library
Contact Mary Morgan--803-734-8866

10th Annual Patchwork Tales Storytelling Festival

March 17-19, 2005
York County Library
www.patchworktales.org

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